

# NEWS RELEASE



**ARIZONA DEPT. OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY**  
1110 West Washington Street  
Phoenix, Arizona 85007  
Contact: Cortland Coleman, 602-771-2215

**ARIZONA ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE**  
1275 West Washington Street  
Phoenix, Arizona 85007  
Contact: Andrea Esquer, 602-542-8019

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### ADEQ Director Owens, Attorney General Goddard Announce Consent Judgment for City of El Mirage

PHOENIX (Aug. 26, 2004) – Arizona Department of Environmental Quality Director Steve Owens and Attorney General Terry Goddard today announced a consent judgment with the City of El Mirage that requires significant improvements to the City's wastewater collection and treatment operations. The action stems from a 2002 discharge of untreated wastewater into the Agua Fria River.

The enforcement action followed the discharge of more than 847,000 gallons of untreated wastewater into the river near the City's former wastewater treatment facility. Similar discharges of partially treated effluent in 2000 and 2001 also were addressed in the judgment.

Under the terms of the judgment, the City is required to implement pretreatment measures costing \$60,000 annually and to build a new \$950,000 reclaimed water storage facility.

"As a result of this case, the City is making significant improvements to its wastewater collection and treatment process," Owens said. "These corrective actions should ensure that this type of incident never occurs again."

In addition to the infrastructure changes required by the judgment, the City has upgraded from the former wastewater treatment plant – where the non-permitted discharges took place – to a new facility with a treatment capacity of 3.6 million gallons per day.

City officials informed ADEQ of the incidents and later reported that inefficient operation of the plant was the primary cause. There was no immediate public health threat from the discharge, and the city took appropriate steps to disinfect the area surrounding the Agua Fria and clean up remnants of the spill.

## El Mirage Consent Judgment 2-2-2

“Discharges such as those by El Mirage could constitute a significant public health threat,” Goddard said. “It is important for the state to work with local municipalities in resolving not only the immediate violations, but implementing proper control measures to prevent non-permitted discharges in the future.”

The City will have 180 days from the date of the judgment to develop and submit to ADEQ a plan for pretreatment of wastewater effluent. The city will have one year to plan and construct the reclaimed water storage facility. The consent judgment also requires the city to pay a \$9,900 civil penalty for the permit violations.